

BEFORE  
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
DOCKET NO. 2018-372-C

IN RE:

Application of Horry Telephone Cooperative, Inc. for an )  
Expansion of its Certificate of Public Convenience and )  
Necessity to Provide Local Exchange and Exchange Access )  
Service to Customers Located in Certain Areas of the State )  
of South Carolina )  
\_\_\_\_\_)

**TESTIMONY OF BRENT GROOME**

1   **Q.   PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS.**

2   **A.**   My name is Brent Groome. My business address is 3480 Hwy 701 N., Conway, South  
3       Carolina 29528.

4   **Q.   BY WHOM AND IN WHAT CAPACITY ARE YOU EMPLOYED?**

5   **A.**   I am employed by Horry Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (“HTC”) as its Chief Executive –  
6       Marketing, Economic, and Strategic Initiatives.

7   **Q.   PLEASE BRIEFLY OUTLINE YOUR EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND**  
8       **EXPERIENCE IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY.**

9   **A.**   I joined HTC in 1990 and have nearly 30 years of experience with HTC, including Public  
10       Relations Representative, Assistant Commercial Manager, Commercial Manager, and Chief  
11       Executive – Customer Operations. In my current role, I oversee all marketing operations, as  
12       well as economic and strategic initiatives of the company. Prior to joining HTC, I started my

1 communications career with GTE in 1987. I graduated from the University of North Carolina  
2 – Chapel Hill with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism with emphasis in Public Relations. I  
3 currently serve on several local and national boards.

4 **Q. ON WHOSE BEHALF ARE YOU TESTIFYING HERE TODAY AND WHAT IS**  
5 **THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY?**

6 **A.** I am testifying on behalf of HTC. By its Application, HTC requests that the Public Service  
7 Commission of South Carolina (“Commission”) amend HTC’s existing Certificate of Public  
8 Convenience and Necessity to expand the area for which HTC is authorized to provide local  
9 exchange and exchange access service. The purpose of my testimony is to describe the  
10 expanded geographic HTC seeks to serve, and to demonstrate that HTC possesses sufficient  
11 technical, financial, and managerial resources to provide local exchange and exchange access  
12 telecommunications services in those areas of the State of South Carolina for which it seeks to  
13 expand its certification.

14 **Q. PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HORRY TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE,**  
15 **INC.**

16 **A.** HTC is an incumbent local exchange carrier ( “ILEC”) and provides local exchange services,  
17 both as an ILEC within its ILEC service area and as a competitive local exchange carrier outside  
18 its ILEC service area, as well as intrastate exchange access service within geographical areas  
19 established by the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the “Commission”). HTC was  
20 formed in 1952 and has been providing local exchange service as an ILEC to rural areas in Horry  
21 County since that time. HTC’s former affiliate, HTC Communications, Inc. (which subsequently  
22 changed its name to HTC Communications, LLC) was granted a Certificate of Public

1 Convenience and Necessity by the Commission in 1998 to provide local exchange and exchange  
2 access services to customers in Horry County and those portions of Georgetown County known  
3 as the Waccamaw Neck and the City of Georgetown. *See* Commission Order No. 98-323 in  
4 Docket No. 98-049-C. HTC acquired its wholly-owned subsidiary HTC Communications, LLC  
5 and assumed all its assets liabilities and obligations on or about January 1, 2011, including all  
6 certifications and authorizations. *See* Commission Order Non. 2012-261 in Docket Nos. 1991-  
7 514-C, 1998-49-C, and 2007-402-C.

8 **Q. WHAT AUTHORITY IS HTC SEEKING IN THE CURRENT PROCEEDING?**

9 **A.** HTC seeks to amend its Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, pursuant to S.C. Code  
10 Ann. § 58-9-280 and the rules and regulations of the Commission, to permit it to provide local  
11 exchange and exchange access service to customers located in those areas of the State of South  
12 Carolina that are served by BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. d/b/a AT&T South Carolina  
13 (“AT&T”) in Marion County and Dillon County; and in those areas of the State of South  
14 Carolina that are served by Frontier Communications of the Carolinas, Inc. (“Frontier”) in  
15 Georgetown County where Applicant does not already have authority to provide such service.

16 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE SERVICES HTC PROPOSES TO PROVIDE IN THE**  
17 **EXPANDED AREA.**

18 **A.** HTC will provide similar service, under similar rates, terms and conditions, to customers located  
19 in the expanded area as it currently is providing to customers in its presently certificated service  
20 area. HTC will offer the service at rates comparable to those of the incumbent LEC serving the  
21 area. HTC will provide its local and interexchange services via a combination of traditional  
22 circuit switched (i.e., time division multiplexed or “TDM”) and voice over Internet protocol

1 (“VoIP”) switching platforms. HTC’s TDM and VoIP-based services will be provided on its  
2 independently owned, facilities-based network, and when/where convenient, through resale of  
3 other telecommunications providers’ networks or services. All services are available twenty-  
4 four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days a week. A more complete description of the local  
5 exchange and exchange access services HTC proposes to offer in the State of South Carolina can  
6 be found in its existing tariffs that are on file with the Commission, which will be updated as  
7 necessary to reflect the provision of similar services in the expanded area. HTC will also offer  
8 broadband services and bundled services in the expanded area, which will not be tariffed but  
9 will be offered under similar rates, terms and conditions to those offered in HTC’s currently  
10 certificated service area.

11 **Q. DOES HTC POSSESS SUFFICIENT TECHNICAL, MANAGERIAL AND FINANCIAL**  
12 **RESOURCES TO PROVIDE THE SERVICES FOR WHICH IT REQUESTS**  
13 **AUTHORITY?**

14 **A.** Yes. The Commission granted HTC’s certificate in Commission Order No. 98-323, more than  
15 twenty years ago, upon a finding by the Commission that HTC had the technical, financial, and  
16 managerial resources sufficient to provide the requested services within the State of South  
17 Carolina, and that HTC met all other requirements of certification. HTC continues to meet these  
18 requirements, as demonstrated in the description of key personnel attached as Exhibit A to its  
19 Application filed in this docket, and HTC’s most recent Telecommunications Company Annual  
20 Report, which is on file with the Commission and is attached as Exhibit B to the Application.  
21 HTC’s long history of providing high quality service as both an incumbent local exchange  
22 carrier within its ILEC area and as a competitive local exchange carrier in Horry and

1 Georgetown Counties further attests to its ability to provide the requested services in South  
2 Carolina.

3 **Q. WILL GRANTING HTC'S REQUEST SERVE THE PUBLIC INTEREST?**

4 **A.** Yes. Amending HTC's certificate to expand its service area will serve the public interest. HTC  
5 is an established local exchange carrier in South Carolina. Provision of service by HTC in the  
6 requested service area will enhance competition in the State of South Carolina by offering  
7 additional service options and high service quality to South Carolina telecommunications users.

8 **Q. WILL THE SERVICE PROVIDED BY HTC MEET ALL SERVICE STANDARDS**  
9 **THAT THE COMMISSION MAY ADOPT?**

10 **A.** Yes. HTC will continue to meet all service standards that the Commission may adopt, as it  
11 does today.

12 **Q. WILL THE PROVISION OF SERVICE BY HTC ADVERSELY IMPACT THE**  
13 **AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE LOCAL EXCHANGE SERVICE IN SOUTH**  
14 **CAROLINA?**

15 **A.** No. The service provided by HTC in the expanded service area will not adversely impact the  
16 availability of affordable local exchange service in South Carolina.

17 **Q. WILL HTC ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE SUPPORT OF UNIVERSALLY**  
18 **AVAILABLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE AT AFFORDABLE RATES?**

19 **A.** Yes. To the extent it may be required to do so by the Commission, HTC will participate in  
20 the support of universally available telecommunications services at affordable rates.

21

1   **Q.    IS HTC REQUESTING FLEXIBLE REGULATION OF ITS LOCAL EXCHANGE**  
2       **SERVICE OFFERINGS?**

3   **A.**    Yes. The Commission has previously granted HTC's request for flexible regulation of its  
4       competitive local exchange telecommunications services. *See* Commission Order No. 98-974 in  
5       Docket No. 1998-049-C. HTC requests the same treatment for local exchange  
6       telecommunications services provided in the expanded area for which it requests expanded  
7       certification.

8   **Q.    WHAT ACTION ARE YOU ASKING THE COMMISSION TO TAKE IN REGARD**  
9       **TO THIS APPLICATION?**

10  **A.**    Horry Telephone Cooperative, Inc. respectfully requests that the Commission approve its  
11       Application to amend its Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to permit it to provide  
12       local exchange and exchange access services to customers located in those areas described in  
13       HTC's Application and this testimony, and that HTC's rates and tariffs for such local  
14       telecommunications service in the expanded area be regulated in accordance with the principles  
15       and procedures established for flexible regulation, consistent with the authority previously  
16       granted by the Commission to HTC for the local exchange areas it currently serves.

17  **Q.    DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY?**

18  **A.**    Yes, it does.

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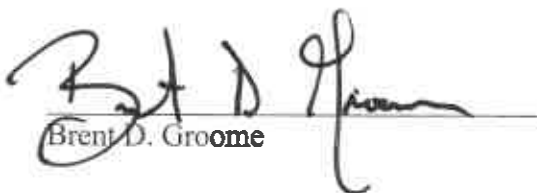
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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

COUNTY OF HORRY

**VERIFICATION**

I, Brent D. Groome, first being duly sworn, depose and say that I am employed by Horry Telephone Cooperative, Inc. as its Chief Executive – Marketing, Economic, and Strategic Initiatives; that I prepared the foregoing testimony to be pre-filed in the above-captioned docket and know the contents thereof; and that said contents are true.

  
Brent D. Groome

SWORN to before me this  
23 day of January, 2019.

 L.S.

Carol G. Cox, Notary Public for the State of South Carolina  
My Commission expires: February 2, 2026

